

San Juan Islands Conservation District

State Legislative District #40
Congressional District #2

Other Accomplishments

With UW Labs, monitored 14 priority watersheds threatened by residential development.

Participated and collaborated with the San Juan Initiative and Puget Sound Partnership efforts.

Created an eleven-page Low Impact Living folio for county residents.

Facilitated the ongoing Agricultural Resources Committee and helped create the Agricultural Guild.

Collaborated with other conservation groups to form the Stewardship Network and co-sponsored a San Juan Islands Conservation Summit and Steward-ship Awards event day.

Developed eight farm and forest plans that have assisted landowners with best management practices to protect 201 acres of San Juan County.



2008 Feature Accomplishment

Fostering Farmland Preservation

Resource Challenge

Farmland is being lost at an alarming rate in San Juan County. In 1954, there were approximately 45,463 acres of farmland in San Juan County. By 2002, the number of acres had shrunk to 17,145 acres. Development pressures are non-stop, and the value of land in the county is exorbitant.

Project Summary and Results

Farmland preservation is a top priority for the San Juan Islands Conservation District and the Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC) of San Juan County. In January 2008, the ARC received a grant from the Office of Farmland Preservation to conduct an education campaign on agricultural conservation easements. The campaign consists of four components: media outreach, agricultural landowner contact, community presentations, and an agricultural land inventory with associated one-on-one networking. To date there have been four public workshops, five newspaper articles, a collaborative county-wide farm and food questionnaire, a wind-shield survey of farmlands on San Juan, Orcas and Lopez islands, and over a dozen face-to-face visits with farmland owners. In addition to these efforts, the ARC developed an “early warning” system with the county assessor to notify the committee when farmland was under threat of being removed from the Agriculture Open Space tax relief program. The results of our efforts so far are an increased awareness and understanding of conservation easements and tax relief program options by farmland owners. Mapping of agricultural resources in the county is also well underway.

Key Project Partners

Agricultural Resources Committee
Office of Farmland Preservation
San Juan County Assessors Office
San Juan County Council
San Juan County Land Bank
San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild
San Juan Preservation Trust
WSU Extension – San Juan County



Contact Information

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Board of Supervisors:
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Henning Sehmsdorf, Vice Chair
Vicki Heater, Auditor
Shannon Hoffman, Member
Thor Hanson, Member

More Work To Do

Increase the contributions of agriculture to ecosystem health by supporting the Agricultural Resources Committee.

Continue working to reduce the farm/ forest plan backlog.

Work to include agriculture in the county public benefit rating system for open space.

Increase the protection of water resources through promotion of low impact development (LID) techniques via site visits for landowners.

Continue to fund watershed monitoring and agricultural land mapping projects.